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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: TUZ KHURMATO: THREE VERY
DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES FROM TURKMEN, ARABS, KURDS

REF: BAGHDAD 670

Classified By: Salah Ad Din PRT Leader Rick Bell for reasons 1.4 (d).

(U) This is a PRT Salah ad Din reporting cable.

11. (C) SUMMARY: On March 26, Poloffs and PRT and CF staff met with representatives from each of the three main ethnic groups in the Tuz Khurmato district of Salah ad Din (SaD): Turkmen, Sunni Arabs, and Kurds. The United Nations (UN) views Tuz as one of the areas with Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) in Iraq. The three groups (in separate meetings) predictably gave widely differing perspectives on the district, and did not acknowledge each others' points of view. The Arabs and Turkmen were concerned that Kurdish expansionism from Erbil threatened stability in Tuz, and that Kurdish pressure would influence the UN and USG. The Turkmen also felt alienated from the Sunni Arab-dominated provincial government, while the Arabs focused on the loss of two elements of their former power: the Ba'ath Party and the old Iraqi Army. The Kurds emphasized their history of oppression, and hoped that Tuz would be realigned with Kirkuk province soon. All three groups were aware of the upcoming UNAMI report on Tuz and other disputed areas in northern Iraq, and uneasy about what it would say. All considered it important that boundary disputes be resolved before the withdrawal of U.S. forces. END SUMMARY.

TURKMEN CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

12. (C) The Turkmen saw themselves most threatened by Kurdish expansionism, which they said was driven by Erbil, not by local Kurds. Led by newly elected PC member Ali Hashem Noori, they were quick to point out that, unlike other areas with an ethnic mix such as Kirkuk, Diyala and Ninewah, Tuz enjoys relative peace among its different ethnicities and sects. The Turkmen complained that PUK and KDP militias, as well as Asaish (Kurdish Intelligence Service), were acting outside the law. They also insisted that the Iraqi Army (IA) must fill the security gap when CF withdraw, rather than a Kurdish security force. While making common cause with Arabs against the Kurds, the Turkmen also felt neglected by the Sunni Arab-dominated provincial government in SaD. They shared a copy of a joint petition by local Turkmen to UNAMI calling for Tuz to be made into an independent province. As many Turkmen are Shiites, they have direct ties to Baghdad.

13. (C) The Turkmen worried about the fairness of the upcoming UNAMI report on disputed areas in northern Iraq. Their concerns were heightened, they said, when the Kirkuk Provincial Council Chairman discussed the issue in a recent closed-door meeting with SRS de Mistura; they still have not been informed what transpired in that meeting, despite having asked for clarification. The Tuz Turkmen petition to UNAMI laid out a clear stance: Tuz should not be considered among the disputed areas (NOTE: The district was part of Kirkuk until SaD province was founded in 1976. END NOTE). They held that Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution has legally expired and that renewing it would require a constitutional

amendment.

ARABS LAMENT LOSS OF POWER; FEAR OUTSIDE THREATS

14. (C) The Tuz Sunni Arabs saw threats from the Kurds and other outsiders, notably Iran. Unlike the Kurds and Turkmen, they conveyed a strong sense of the importance of patriotism and were offended to see Tuz Kurds fly the KRG flag. They worried that some Kurds wanted to remove Tuz from SAD province, and that through Kurdish influence the UNAMI Qprovince, and that through Kurdish influence the UNAMI reports would cause additional suffering (beyond that of the past six years) to Sunni Arabs. They bemoaned the loss of strong institutions (the Ba'ath Party and the former army) run by capable, trained officers (COMMENT: Sunni Arab officers disproportionately staffed the former IA, though they did not say it. END COMMENT). The Arabs saw Tuz as part of the inviolable Iraqi national territory, and the greater long-term threat as coming from Iran. As Sheikh Husam Al Bayati put it: "Iranians have wanted to take control of Iraq for 1,350 years." Without a strong Iraqi Army in place, they feared that when CF withdraw Iran is likely to fill the gap.

15. (C) The Arabs dismissed the current Iraqi Army as a militia, whose leaders lack the professional training of the former army's officers. Those in government now in Baghdad were in hotels while the true Iraqi patriots were in the trenches. The best solution would be to bring the old professional soldiers, the true patriots, and the "innocent Ba'athists" back. "After all", they argued, "the army and the Ba'ath Party existed long before Saddam came to power."

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KURDS PLAY THE VICTIM CARD

16. (C) The Kurdish group was led by Tuz Qaimmaqam "Mayor" Mohammed Rasheed Raouf and newly elected PC member Amin Aziz Jawad. For the Tuz Kurds, the discussion began with a recitation of their history of oppression (COMMENT: Neither the Sunni Arabs nor the Turkmen acknowledged this. END COMMENT). They listed Saddam's orders to destroy 54 of their villages in 1986 and 1988 in an attempt to push the Kurds out of Tuz, and recalled their people's suffering in the 1991 uprising. They saw it as part of the course of history that Tuz should be returned to Kirkuk, from which it was separated in 1976.

17. (C) In the Kurds' view, Tuz is tied to Kirkuk by blood and business ties, which are much closer than its administrative connection to SaD, from which it is separated by the natural barrier of the Hamrin Mountains and the bureaucratic barrier of an unresponsive provincial government in Tikrit. The UN and US should enforce Article 140 so that Tuz can return to Kirkuk. As uncaring as Tikrit is, the GOI in Baghdad is no better, they say. The Kurds complained that government jobs are doled out disproportionately to Arabs. An even bigger problem is GOI land made available to corrupt Arabs who do not even live in Tuz, which the Kurds can only lease. The Kurds saw little value in the UNAMI representative's visit to Tuz)- yes, he listened, but in the end there was nothing new. The one point on which the Kurds agreed with the Arabs and Turkmen was that it is critical to resolve boundary disputes prior to CF withdrawal.

COMMENT

18. (C) While Tuz Khurmato has not suffered inter-ethnic violence as other disputed areas have, fear and mutual mistrust inform Sunni Arab, Turkman, and Kurdish opinions of the impending release of UNAMI's reports, and of the future of the district. This fear and mistrust could complicate

efforts to further reconcile ethnic differences in Tuz. END
COMMENT.
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